

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
FEDERAL SUPPLY SERVICE
PROCUREMENT OPERATIONS DIVISION

QUESTIONNAIRE - MAGNETIC COMPUTER TAPE SURVEY

FOR FISCAL YEAR 1963 TO DATE
UNLESS OTHERWISE SPECIFIED

I - EXPERIENCE/HISTORY

- (a) Approximately ninety percent of the reels have been purchased centrally. Local purchase was used only for reasons of security.
- (b) All centrally purchased reels were purchased on a consolidated basis.
- (c) There have been no excess tapes reported in any of the three CIA Computer Centers.

II - TAPE PERFORMANCE

- (a) Tapes purchased from equipment manufacturers have generally given satisfactory performance.
- (b) The one major exception was in 1960 when a large number (several hundred) tapes purchased from RCA had to be replaced for a variety of reasons. At that time the tapes were manufactured by Reeves. For the last several years RCA has been furnishing 3M tapes which have provided generally satisfactory performance.
- (c) Tapes purchased from other than equipment manufacturers have generally not provided satisfactory performance, with the exception of Ampex.
- (d) In 1963 sample groups of thirty each tapes were purchased from Computron, Memorex, Ampex, and Audio. No specific performance tests were specified or conducted, only the general reactions of the operating centers were solicited. As a result, it was determined that, in general, these tapes build up excess oxide (particularly the Memorex tapes). In addition, some difficulty was experienced in the reliability of the data on the tape after normal use. This was determined by the routine tape diagnostic runs which disclosed read/write error and redundancies, and in some cases, weak signals. The plastic safety rings on some of the Computron reels became defective. As a result of these general evaluations and price advantage over IBM, the Agency recently placed an order for 1,000 reels with Ampex.
- (e) The defective tapes reported in Column 10 of Exhibit "A" were defective for the reasons cited above. No records were kept of the nature of the defects by individual reels.

- (f) Because of the fact that almost all the information placed on magnetic tapes in the Agency is classified and, in light of the security hazards in releasing or returning such tapes to the manufacturer, the policy has been followed, that once tapes were written on with classified information, they could not be downgraded and thus released to manufacturers for replacement. The bulk of the RCA tapes found defective in the early sixties were returned and replaced since the information at that time used for testing was not classified. In recent years, the relatively minor number of RCA tapes found defective have been replaced free of charge without the necessity of the defective tapes being returned. This is also true with the relatively small number of IBM tapes found defective. It is the policy of the Agency to destroy defective tapes for the security reason outlined above.
- (g) No regular tape performance tests are being conducted at the present time.
- (h) One computer center reported that a few tapes that were used many hours each day showed deterioration in performance in a few months. As a result, heavy duty type tapes have been ordered to be used on those applications that require heavy use.

III - MAINTENANCE

- (a) The new unused tapes are normally stored under normal office or warehouse conditions until they are requisitioned and received by one of the computer centers. In one of the three centers the tapes are retained under normal office conditions. In two of the three centers the new unused tapes are stored under controlled humidity and temperature conditions.
- (b) None of the centers reported any experience regarding tape cleaning or tape recertification.
- (c) All centers reported that the read/write heads are routinely cleaned once every eight hour period.
- (d) Two of the centers reported that when using Memorex tapes, the read/write heads had to be cleaned more frequently because of excessive oxidation.

IV - MAXIMUM ORDER LIMITATION

It is the opinion of this Agency that the maximum order limitation in the Federal supply schedule should remain at \$75,000.

V - GENERAL

It is the opinion of this Agency that it would be in the best interest of this and other Agencies to continue the present FSS-schedule contract arrangements.